

THE PERFECT LETTER WRITER

Jamais toute la morale d'un pedagogue
ne vaudra
le bavardage affectueux et tendre d'une
femme sensee
pour qui Ton a de Tattachement/—
Rousseau.

e are in the year 1648. General
Cromwell is rising
steadily to power in England; beyond the
Channel, Cardinal
Mazarin is already seated on the neck
of France;
Louis XIV is a neglected little boy often;
Charles I lies
prisoner in the Isle of Wight, in the keep of
Carisbrooke;
and from an inn in that island a party of
young travellers
is just setting out—two youths and a girl. At
the last
moment one of the young men turns round,
goes back
into the inn, and there writes something with
a diamond
on the window-pane. It is a sentence from
the Bible,
. from the *Book of Esther*, 'And Hamman was
hang'd upon
the Gallows he had prepar'd for Mordecai/
That done,
he hurries after his companions. A moment
later someone
notices the writing. Its meaning is as
transparent as the
glass it is written on: 'Hamman' is Colonel
Robert Ham-
mond, Governor of the Isle of Wight for the
Parliament,
and gaoler of King Charles. This insolent
young devil
of a Cavalier has been quoting Scripture
very much to
his purpose. There is a hue and cry;
horsemen go clatter-

ing off; the three young people are brought
back and led
before the Governor himself, 'Which of you
did this?'
Before the real culprit can answer, the girl,
his sister, has
broken in: 'I did/ A woman?—that is
different; even in
the England of the Civil War all chivalry has
not perished
with the Cavaliers. Probably with a smile, the
Governor